

First observation of *Acropora robusta* (Dana, 1846) on the high-latitude coral reefs of South Africa: A species range extension

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Figure 1. a) Surface detail of *Acropora robusta* branches and b) the large *A. robusta* colony with fully developed branches on Two-mile Reef, Sodwana Bay.

The coral reefs of South Africa are considered marginal due to their high-latitude location and non-accretive coral communities (Riegl *et al.* 1995). Nevertheless, 134 species of coral have been recorded on the reefs, 96 of which are hard corals (Schleyer & Celliers 2003). The genus *Acropora* is the most speciose with 17 recorded species. The majority of acroporids may be classified as having plate or digitate (bushy) morphologies, while branching forms are less common. In October 2012, while conducting monitoring studies on the reefs, a large (1 x 0.6 m) branching acroporid colony (Fig. 1a, b) was observed and photographed at a depth of 12 m on Two-mile Reef at Sodwana Bay (27°31.649S 32°41.061E). Identification of the acroporid revealed it to be *Acropora robusta* (Dana, 1846) (Wallace *et al.* 2011). *A. robusta* is found in the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, south-west and northern Indian Ocean, and the central Indo-Pacific and oceanic west Pacific regions (Richards *et al.* 2008). However, it is most common in the central Indian Ocean (Wallace *et al.* 2001). The most southerly distribution for this species reported to date is central Mozambique. The colony observed on Two-mile Reef is the first record of *A. robusta* on South African coral reefs and thus constitutes an extension in its range.

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